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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7411
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 7213
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1761
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4310
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 9335
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 3636
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JCS WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI

UNCLAS BANGKOK 003115

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SUBJECT: THAI GOVERNMENT RELAXES POLITICAL PARTY
RESTRICTIONS

REF: BANGKOK 2994 (TRT DISSOLVED)

¶1. (U) Following a cabinet meeting on June 5, a government spokesman announced the cabinet's decision to lift with immediate effect a prohibition on political parties' conduct of political activities. The cabinet also decided to draft a bill to lift or modify a ban on the registration of new political parties. The cabinet spokesman urged quick parliamentary consideration for and passage of this bill. (Note: The aforementioned prohibitions were established by Council for Democratic Reform Announcement Number 15, dated September 21. The cabinet is taking no action on Announcement Number 27, from September 30, which imposed a five-year loss of political rights for executive board members of any political party ordered dissolved. End Note.)

¶2. (SBU) Comment: The lifting of restrictions on parties' activities is a meaningful and positive step. Since the coup, political party leaders have been able to speak out publicly, and even criticize the authorities, but they have said they need this recision in order to prepare for upcoming elections. Any bill which, in effect, permits Thai Rak Thai supporters to form new parties -- perhaps even under the TRT name -- may prove more controversial than the government seems to expect.
BOYCE